

NEWENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF NEWENDEN PARISH COUNCIL held on TUESDAY 7 July 2026 at 7pm in St Peter's church

PRESENT: Councillors Viv Robertson (VR) chairman, Tim J. Moody (TJM) vice-chairman, Dave Wheeler (DW) and John Turnbull (JT).

IN ATTENDANCE: Ashford Borough Councillor Guy Pullen, Lauren Dobson (clerk) and 14 members of the public.

MINUTES

The meeting commenced at 19.02

1. **Apologies for absence** – apologies had been received from KCC Cllr Wayne Chapman.
2. **Declarations of interest whether personal or pecuniary regarding matters on the agenda.**
There were none.

At 19:05 the meeting was adjourned for:

3. **Public Questions** – an opportunity for members of the public to address or ask questions to the Parish Council in respect of any item on this agenda or request items for discussion at a future meeting (maximum 10 mins).

Several questions and comments were raised regarding the **village hall**:

- a) Mr Richard Gould (current Trustee of Newenden Village Hall) reported he had heard a rumour that the PC had written to the Charities Commission about the legitimacy of the current hall Trustees and asked if that was true. VR confirmed the PC had approached the Charity Commission¹ but it was about historical documents and procedures, not the efforts of the current Trustees.
- b) Ms. E Hannavy-Cousen (E H-C, a former trustee of the village hall project) asked what the historical concern is. Another person stated that no one would stand as a trustee, and the Charity Commission had already said that existing trustees could stand in as temporary Trustees until the build was complete so why was the PC going back to the Charity Commission now.
- c) E. H-C asked what the email said, stating there is maliciousness in the village and it all comes from the same person. She continued by saying that the Parish Council has done nothing but cause detriment to the hall and asked again what the council is concerned about. VR responded that the council had received some complaints from residents and had handed all the information the council has to the Charity Commission to seek advice on whether procedures were correctly followed. Ms. E. Hannavy-Cousen stated she found it very disturbing that the PC had gone ahead without discussing with her or other former trustees and wanted to know for what purpose and how many people had complained, 2 or 3 could just be maliciousness.
- d) Alan Seal, a current Trustee, explained that when Dennis Rose (parish councillor between Dec 2019 to May 2023) tried to take over the project, he called in a liaison person between KCC and the Charities Commission. This was when the Charities Commission confirmed the hall could have temporary Trustees.

¹ The Council's decision to seek Charity Commission input was discussed and recorded at its meeting held January 2026.

- e) TJM re-stated the Parish Council had received a complaint and simply sent to the correct channel to investigate. It was following due process
- f) A member of the public stated that former Trustees took on the buying and selling of the last village hall voluntarily and in good faith. VR said if there is nothing of concern then there should be nothing to worry about and very much hopes that is the case.
- g) Another member of public asked those present not to lose sight of what everyone in the village wants – the opening of the village hall.
- h) E H-C asked what the PC is actually doing for the village. For the young people and for older people. Why is the Council not being proactive, why not go out to everybody in the village to find out what people want - as the previous village hall committee did. VR explained volunteers are needed to run things and often people just don't come forward. DW explained the PC has made provision for village activities by establishing a grant for villagers to organise events but so far only the organisers of last year's fun day have applied.
- i) E H.C asked if residents could organise an entertainments committee – VR replied, stating yes of course, the PC would be delighted to see .

The meeting restarted 19.30

- 4. **To consider and approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2026. The draft minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were duly signed by the chairman.
- 5. **Matters arising** from the minutes/ action points from 12th May 2026 (*not covered elsewhere on agenda*)
 - **Review of byelaws** – a meeting is planned for early September. Judy Vinson (JV) will be representative for the Selmes Trust, TJM for the Parish Council, and Jacky Lamb and Jillian Eldridge for the Newenden Meadow project.
 - **Shared village action plan** – following discussion at the May parish council meeting JV reported she had approached Gillian Dalton and is waiting for a convenient time to discuss further. DW stated he would like to be the PC representative. **Action:** DW to write to all village groups and everyone who showed an interest at the May and July meetings to discuss how the village can move towards a more cohesive approach.
- 6. **Verbal Reports from Council members**
 - i. **Highways**
 - a. Lossenham lane – there is a planned closure 3-13th August for sewer pipe works. KCC states the lane will remain open for residents as far as possible throughout. **Action:** LD to put notice on website.
 - b. A resident had asked the Council to consider requesting KCC highways add solid white lines to the Rye Road between the White Hart pub and the bridge to dissuade drivers from the increasingly common issue of dangerous overtaking in the centre of the village. VR reported this has been on the PC's highway improvement plan for a while but KCC has previously said no. General agreement that speeding through the village is horrendous and people are overtaking and bypassing the red lights on the bridge, it is a serious accident waiting to happen. **Action:** VR to speak to KCC highways again and suggest the lines could be done at the same time as the bridge repairs in 2027. DW reported he had heard there are also plans for a new water main to be installed from the top of the hill to Donsmead in Northiam, it would make sense for this to also be timetabled for the bridge closure.
 - c. the changes to the junction at the top of the hill are causing concern to a number of residents. VR reported that the PC has approached KCC about the junction but it is

unlikely anything will change as the new arrangement is considered the safest option. The PC could ask for a reduction in speed to 30mph. **Action:** PC to consider requesting speed reduction to next version of the Highway Improvement Plan.

ii. **Drains**

- a. Recent sewage on the Queen's Field – VR explained that following an initial leak on the Queen's Field in November 2025 much time and effort had been spent trying to find the cause. All authorities (KCC, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) and Southern water) advised approaching the landowner, the Selmes Trust (ST). This was done on several occasions, but ST representatives repeatedly said that they had no knowledge of the pipe in question so the PC approached the Environment Agency (EA) to try and get the serious contamination under control and properly dealt with.

Nicola Holland (NH) and Sue Bourne (SB), on behalf of the John Bourne Group were invited to speak.

NH stated the company was first aware of an issue when it received a letter from the EA. When it investigated it found cement had been put into the pipe and caused further blockage. The company is very concerned both that someone could block a pipe in this way and cause so much time wasting and damage over such a long period but also that lies were reported to the EA that the John Bourne Group then had to deal with. It also had to cover the cost of a significant bill. It could all have been avoided if the PC had approached the company direct. VR accepted this was regrettable but that it wasn't what she was being told by the authorities.

JT asked if the cricket pavilion, village hall and Bournes all pay separate sewerage – NH confirmed this was the case.

DW reported that during the investigation the PC had learned that new properties in the village can be connected to the mains which was not the previous understanding generally held in the village and was good news for potential development.

Alan Seal (AS, for the village hall and as an associate of the Selmes Trust) reported that Elliot Carpenter, an officer from ABC building control, had confirmed that his department held all the records from 1998 when the original planning for the drain was given. This is counter to the information the PC received from ABC.

All agreed that someone in the village has maliciously blocked the drain and allowed people to waste time and money which is appalling.

VR read out a statement on behalf of the PC, refuting a number of claims made by the ST in recent correspondence about the incident (see annex for full PC statement) and condemning the act of vandalism that led to the leak continuing for so long.

SB agreed that the Selmes Trust must take responsibility for the issue continuing for as long as it did and if as an organisation its Trustees don't have the correct information it must keep better records. SB believes some records are held in the church bell tower.

VR stated that in hindsight the PC should have spoken to the John Bourne Group directly but so should the ST as landowner have spoken to its tenants.

SB requested the PC please approach Jonathan Bourne directly with any issues or concerns relating to the Bourne's group in the future. The company does try very hard to facilitate good relationships and wants that to continue.

Hugh Edmonds (HE) on behalf of the ST reported that South East water are going to get back to the ST who will then remove or reconnect the tap.

Amendment to Minutes 26/08/2026

Resident Nicola Holland who investigated and arranged for the fixing of the leak noted that the PC's statement (see annex) ref the leak seemed to be factually inaccurate. It states that the broken manhole cover was the main cause of the leak, and that the cement being put into the chamber only exacerbated the leak. A small part of the plastic manhole cover was snapped off when it was levered off (it is screwed in at 4

sides) in order for the perpetrator to put the cement into the chamber, blocking the chamber and causing the sewerage to leak out of the top. The broken manhole in of itself did not have anything to do with causing the leak, it was a victim of the act of vandalism that was deliberate sabotage of a private drainage system, with the intention of causing sewerage to leak into the adjacent environment.

iii. **Resilience** – plan to be completed when capacity allows. **Action:** Clerk.

iv. **Playground**

a. Installation of existing baby swing – DW has the old seat and once the annual inspection has taken place (expected in July) TJM and JT will look to install.

7. Finance and Governance

i. Authorisation of accounts – to approve payments and note receipts between 1st May and 30th June 2026 (see below).

Balance as per bank statements 30th April 2026	£
Unity Trust bank – current account	955.11
Unity Trust bank – general reserves	14098.55
Unity Trust bank – playground funds	6984.66
Total	22038.32

Payments made	VAT £	Total £
Clerk salary – May and June		£ 1,126.00
PAYE NI and tax		£ 80.78
NEST pension (incl employee contribution)		£ 89.54
Bank charge May and June		£ 14.00
Grass cutting - 3rd cut		£ 415.00
Hopkins - defibrillator annual aftercare 26/27	£ 41.58	£ 249.48
Selmes Trust - ground rent for playground 26/27		£ 50.00
Hopkins - defibrillator consumables (new battery and pads)	£ 65.19	£ 391.14
	Total out	£ 2,415.94
Receipts		
Bank Interest		£ 89.65
	Total in	£ 89.65

Balance as per bank statements 30th June 2026	£
Unity Trust bank – current account	1039.17
Unity Trust bank – general reserves	16477.77
Unity Trust bank – playground funds	2195.09
Total	19712.03

- ii. Cllrs reviewed the budget vs. spend to end of Q1. There were no variances of any concern and all agreed the current position was as expected (see annex).
A member of the public asked if it would be possible for the council to install a dog poo bin on Frogs Hill. **Action:** Cllr Pullen to take forward.
- iii. Councillors considered a request from Kent ACRE for a donation towards their Supporting Rural Communities to Thrive project. Cllrs agreed a donation of £100.
Action: Clerk.
- iv. Cllrs discussed current internal audit arrangements. Having used the same, local auditor for 3 years it was agreed a more independent auditor should be contracted for this financial year. Having considered, Councillors resolved to accept the quote from Local Council Consultancy (LCC) for its internal auditor service for 26/27 financial year at a cost of £255 + VAT.
- v. Website and email – LD updated the Council on recent issues and the move to the new provider. The migration to the new website and email has gone well and both are much easier to use and so far appear to have significantly more functionality for less annual cost.

8. Planning – to consider any planning applications received from Ashford Borough Council and any other planning matters. There were no new applications to consider.

- a) As agreed at the May meeting, the PC wrote a letter of concern to ABC to record the Council's disappointment regarding the granting of permission for retrospective application PA/2025/2282 without conditions relating to disabled access. ABC's response was noted.

9. To review and resolve whether to adopt / re-adopt:

- a) Draft IT policy – the policy discussion was deferred to the next meeting.
- b) Safeguarding policy – Cllrs resolved to re-adopt the reviewed policy. JV suggested the Council will need to update its safeguarding policy to cover events if organised. VR agreed to be safeguarding lead. **Action:** VR and LD to undertake level 2 safeguarding training before September meeting.
- c) Health and Safety policy – Cllrs resolved to re-adopt the reviewed policy.

10. Matters for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting.

- a) Christmas fair
- b) Jetty – AS confirmed the new position as agreed with the EA and will take forward with B Garman.

VR requested that anyone contacting the Council please record in their correspondence in what capacity / for whom they are acting so it is clear which 'hat' an individual is wearing if involved in more than one village organisation.

Date of future meetings – 15th September 2026, 17th November 2026, 8th December 2026 (budget setting), 19th January 2027, 17th March 2027 (tbc), 18th May 2027 (annual statutory meeting).

11. A member of the public reminded everyone that the Newenden Meadow event will take place on Saturday 11th July 1-4pm, all welcome.

Meeting ended at 20.43

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Annex 1: PC Statement re: Queen's Field Sewage Spill (item 6iia).

The Parish Council confirms we have received a complaint from the Selmes Trustee Rev Lindsay Hammond, senior Trustee of the Selmes Trust. This is in respect of our investigation of the spillage of sewage discharged on Queens Field. The Rev Hammond's complaint is centered on our response to him giving a truthful time line of our events and our correspondence from October 2025 the start of their land's contamination. Members of the council totally refute Trustee Hammond's accusation that we have used, I quote, "Irresponsible, Loose, Misleading, and Derogatory", Terminology. We do not apologize for trying to uncover truthful information and gain advice as to where, what and whom were responsible for raw sewage contaminating a public space and risking a public health issue.

In writing to Southern Water, Ashford Building Control and KCC requesting confirmation of the installation and its correct compliance this was a perfectly natural question to ask any Utility or Authority. Especially having been informed by a trustee of the Selmes Trust / Landowner they had no details or knowledge regarding the pipe installation. With that information the Parish Council was faced with a duty of care taking all measures to protect our responsibility for the Children's playground. The Playground was in very close proximity to the sewage. Therefore, an investigation was urgent and very necessary. The fact the installation was known or not known was completely irrelevant, here was a main sewage outage and this need to be stopped.

Attacking the Parish Council and blaming us for asking questions and seeking advice and information from different organization's is totally unacceptable. I would suggest deflecting their anger towards us the Parish Council is avoiding their own difficult questions about human waste from their land. Southern water, Ashford Planning and Ashford Building control have on numerous occasions advised the PC they held no records and no details were known of this misplaced pipe. Plus, reaffirming it was on privately owned land and those organizations held no liability, the Responsibility was the landowner's. 7 Months passed and the inspection pit was still allowing sewage to contaminate the land, mainly due to the plastic broken cover. With no action to stop the contamination the Parish Council approached the Environment Agency to help in the matter, subsequently with their intervention the matter of the Queen's Field has finally been addressed and confirmation of the installation now known to be the property of John Bourne and Co. A letter of thanks has been sent to the EA thanking them for the help and assistance.

The Parish Council stands by all past and present actions whilst dealing with this unfortunate lengthy incident. This Parish council will always seek information and advice when it is a matter of public health and safety. There is however a further matter we must address - an unknown element of cement was discovered when Bournes were clearing the discharge. This discovery should and has to be condemned by the Parish Council and the village as a whole. This appears to have been a deliberate act that only exacerbated the situation. We are all at a loss to understand any reasoning for that discovery. And therefore, record our total shock and condemn such action. Hopefully the village can all move forward for the future and as they say lessons have been learnt.

Annex 2: Budget vs Q1 spend

	Budget - agreed 8/12/25	Actual income / Expenditure to date (end Q1)	Forecast income / Expenditure to	Expected variance against budget
Administration				
staff costs - salary	6952	1738.8	5214	
General admin - office allowance	312	£ 78.00	234	
staff costs - pension contribution	210	£ 36.34	162	12
General admin - Insurance	600		600	
General admin - Stationery and postage	50		50	
IT - Website	250	470.4		
IT - Email hosting	350			130
General admin - Training and mileage	400		400	
General admin - Meetings - church costs	300		300	
General admin - - printer and printing	750		250	500
General admin - pay as you go phone	50			
General admin - Audit - Internal	155		150	
General admin - Audit - external	260		260	
General admin - Subscriptions - KALC	190	194.42		-4.42
Bank Fees	84	21	63	
Employer NI contribution	293	73.17	220	
Gepeto planning app				
Sub-total Administration	11206	2612.13	7903	637.58
Parks and Open spaces				
Grass cutting and hedge	3120	1935	1185	
play area - inspection	120			
Playground reserve	500		500	
Playground lease	50	50		-50
Maintenance - other	750	640.62	90	
Sub-total Open spaces	4540	2625.62	1775	-50
Highways				
Road plainings				
Road calming - from 24/25 reserves				
Sub-total Highways				
Other				
Discretionary grants or donations	500		500	
Village hall grant - from 24/25 reserves	3000		3000	
Village event fund	500		500	
Sub -total Other	4000		4000	
Total Estimated Costs	19746	5237.75	13678	587.58
Unallocated	84			